

***Why don't you fly? Back door to Beijing – by Bicycle,*  
Christopher JA Smith, Pen Press, £9.99, August 2005**

Redundancy gave the author the freedom (15 months); a stint driving trucks, the funds (a budget of £10/day); while cycle commuting decided his mode of transport and gave him the idea he might be fit enough to ride to Asia. Travelling alone, he experiences kindness, unwanted companionship, loneliness and some 'Perfect Moments' – memories that will "illuminate" his life. There's humour, insight and a lot of Marmite sandwiches. And if you have undertaken anything similar, you will recognise – and sympathise with the author – the variety of responses that greeted him when he returned after 16,500 miles in the saddle. If you're toying with the idea of riding off in search of insight or adventure, and wondering if you are up to it mentally and physically, this tale will convince you, you probably are. But, be warned, it may also convince you that you should. (Rebecca Lack)

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